

NEWS FROM CENTER FIELD

ACTIVITIES ACROSS

THE MEP NETWORK



JUNE/JULY 1997

CALIFORNIA

California Manufacturing Technology Center (CMTC) —

Small to medium-size manufacturers now have greater access to capital through new financial consulting services recently launched by the California Manufacturing Technology Center (CMTC). CMTC developed these services because of frequent requests for financing from both start-up manufacturers and from older companies needing capital to finance growth strategies. This new Capital Raising and Financial Service looks at the manufacturer's financing needs and recommends the best strategies to meet them. Typical assistance includes developing a business plan, preparing documents needed by funding sources, and introducing companies to financial providers. CMTC has carefully screened various financing sources for their expertise, integrity and operating efficiency.

Contact: Bob Bishop, (310) 263-3082.

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut State Technology Extension Program (CONN/STEP)—

CONN/STEP is ready to propel Connecticut's manufacturing companies into the next century. CONN/STEP has recently established an Electronic Commerce Program and is partnering with other companies in order to assist Connecticut manufacturers in three main areas: Business Information Systems, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), and Internet Marketing.

In order to get supplier companies up to speed with EDI, CONN/STEP is offering their assistance. CONN/STEP is working with the supplier companies to help them understand EDI and the requirements they may face in the future.

CONN/STEP is also partnering with some private providers to offer web-page design and Internet access at reduced-rates to manufacturers.

CONN/STEP is gearing up for the next century now! If you would like more information on the program, please contact Tom Burmeister by phone at (202) 484-7083 or by e-mail at T_Burmeister@connstep.state.ct.us.

Contact: Tab Wilkins at (860) 832-4600

GEORGIA

Georgia Manufacturing Extension Alliance (GMEA)—

Human resource and manufacturing process difficulties are the biggest problems facing Georgia industries, according to a recent survey of manufacturers statewide. The biannual survey also reveals that the past two years have seen some advances in technology usage, and assistance from Georgia Tech's Economic Development Institute (EDI) has benefited many firms. (EDI is Georgia's affiliate with the MEP program).

The data collected revealed systems for planning, scheduling, and inventory control also rank high among industry problems, as well as plant layout and quality assurance. Firms indicated fewer problems in environmental health and safety than they did in 1994.

Use of manufacturing technologies/techniques in 1996 resembled 1994 levels; however, use of local area networks rose 19 percent, and the percentage of firms registered to ISO 9000 or QS 9000 tripled over the past two years.

Improved processes, improved management and employee skills, and increased attention to quality were the most



frequently reported benefits by EDI-served companies. Some 30 percent reported an increase in profitability from EDI assistance.

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ILLINOIS

Chicago Manufacturing Center (CMC)—The Chicago Manufacturing Center (CMC) and the Finnish Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) have launched a new service to help small and mid-sized manufacturers in Finland and America create international partnerships, open new markets and access the latest technology and management expertise.

FAME—Finnish American Manufacturing Extension—marked the opening of its first office on Tuesday, April 29, when representatives of the US and Finnish partners hosted a reception at the MTI Business Service Center in Helsinki. NIST MEP has designated CMC as a lead center for the development of international business linkages for MEP clients. Demetria Giannisis, Chicago Manufacturing Center (CMC) executive vice president, and Margaret Phillips, NIST MEP regional manager, represented the US partners at the FAME opening.

FAME is the outgrowth of a pilot program managed by MTI in cooperation with Partners International MC Oy, the Finnish liaison for CMC. While in Finland, Giannisis negotiated contracts with three Finnish enterprises who are seeking alliances with US companies.

"Finland, which is a gateway to Eastern Europe and the nations of the former Soviet Union, is an ideal location for this overseas initiative," Giannisis noted. Finland is also one of the fastest growing export markets for Illinois manufacturers, showing an 85% increase from 1995 to 1996.

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INDIANA

Indiana Business Modernization and Technology Corporation (Indiana BMT)—In May, BMT officially rolled out its Fast PayBackSM Program to help Indiana manufacturers achieve their goals of ISO and QS 9000 certification or compliance. With the tremendous need for QS 9000 certifi-

cation, it didn't take long for ten companies to sign up for the first user group scheduled to begin on June 18. The Fast PayBackSM Program, based on Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center's ISO/QS training system, takes a group of six-to-ten companies through a structured 38-week course to a point where they are ready for auditing. Meeting every two weeks for four hours, the user group approach allows companies to receive the assistance they need at an affordable cost because companies share one instructor.

"Getting into ISO/QS certification is a lot like going into a black hole," stated Dave Grebe, the vice president of an Indianapolis-based manufacturing company, "until you're in the middle of it, you just can't tell how deep of a hole it is." The Fast PayBackSM Program takes away the uncertainty and fear by learning from instructors with years of hands-on quality experience as well as the valuable feedback received from other participating companies. The in-class instruction and information sharing coupled with the in-plant coaching and troubleshooting, helps Indiana companies develop better systems and processes all while saving time and money.

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KENTUCKY

Kentucky Technology Service (KTS)—The Commonwealth of Kentucky Quality Award program, a division of KTS, is well under way in its first award year. Examiners recently underwent training with 26 participants in Lexington and 20 participants in Louisville. The examiners come from a variety of different backgrounds which include: manufacturing, education, service, public utilities, local government, and quality consulting. The program is well on its way to becoming a success with 45 organizations submitting an intent to apply, which is twice as many as the average state quality award program receives.

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NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NCMEP)—The North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NCMEP) recently produced its second NCMEP

newsletter insert and included it within the Industrial Extension Service's Calendar of Events. The calendar of scheduled workshops and seminars is sent to over 12,000 industry-related readers quarterly. The NCMEP insert includes short articles about NCMEP projects and a popular section called "MEP Clinic."

The "MEP Clinic" has become a "Dear Abby" for manufacturers, always beginning with "Dear MEP." Each edition includes two or three questions posed to the center's engineers by customers. NCMEP engineers take turns writing answers to the questions and providing information on NCMEP resources available in the specific area of question. For instance, one manufacturer asked, "We've heard OSHA is getting serious about ergonomics. What can we do in our firm to improve ergonomics?" Our engineer explained the OSHA requirements and suggested that the company consider attending an NCMEP workshop on ergonomics.

Additional copies of the insert are produced and used as a marketing tool in visits with customers, at workshops, and at exhibitions. Manufacturers appreciate the personal attention the "MEP Clinic" demonstrates, and our engineers are able to share their knowledge of current modernization issues with a larger audience, while promoting our services.

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OHIO

Great Lakes Manufacturing Technology Center (GLMTC)—CAMP Inc.'s Quality Program, part of the NIST Great Lakes Manufacturing Technology Center, leads in industrial bookings as one of CAMP Inc.'s most successful recent endeavors. The success is due in part to the consortium concept which allows customers to take quality programs as part of a group of peers. This helps offset the cost of training and also creates a substantial learning environment. J.W. Harley Inc., in Twinsburg, Ohio, is a company that supplies both new and remanufactured equipment used by the electric utilities substations and generating stations. The company has a philosophy to "...add value to the product that it may not have had originally." Part of their continuous improvement efforts was to take part in the CAMP Quality Consortium. "We thought it would be good for us long-term.

It gives us a good, organized way of handling documentation and doing quality checks and balances internally, throughout the whole organization. And eventually, probably, some customers will demand it."

Harley joined CAMP's first ISO 9000 consortium, comparing war stories with other companies and learning from each other. When the registrar's auditing team reviewed the company, Harley passed with "flying colors." "Come hell or high water, we were determined to pass the first time," said Greg Stem, manager of engineering, materials, and shop services. Stem observed though that some of the companies failed because of a lack of upper management support.

After this process, Stem offered some advice to companies considering ISO 9000 certification. "To make it successful, it definitely needs to have the complete buy-in of everyone at the company from the start."

Contact: *Lindy Perkes at (216) 432-5311*

Lake Erie Manufacturing Extension Partnership

(Lake Erie MEP)—Through its parent company EISC, the Lake Erie MEP lets interested manufacturers try a new coating process on an existing or new product at a more efficient and cost-effective way. The EISC's applied coatings laboratory assists manufacturers in applying powder coating to unusual as well as conventional materials such as glass, food, wood, plastic and metal.

EISC's applied coatings laboratory is designed to assist manufacturers with short-runs, trials and process development. This facility allows manufacturers the opportunity to experiment with different coating avenues without investing considerable time or expense.

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Miami Valley Manufacturing Extension Center

(MVMEC)—MVMEC is planning for its fourth year of operation after completing its year three progress review at NIST in Gaithersburg, MD on June 3, 1997. Some of the most recent highlights from year three include: manufacturers successfully completed MVMEC's course in Statistical Process Control Training for Accurate Wire Harness; MVMEC in partnership with Southern Area Manufacturers - Small Business Development Center helped Industrial

Imaging Associates, Inc. develop a marketing plan; and the center offered assistance to Visual Information Institute, Inc. with grant fulfillment and the development of a lucrative financial package. Additionally, MVMEC added an International Trade Assistance Center/counselor as a new service for small and mid-sized manufacturers in southwest Ohio.

As a division of the Edison Materials Technology Center (EMTEC), MVMEC continued its show of support for the entire organization by joining EMTEC at its 10th Anniversary, "Reflections and Visions." During the celebration, EMTEC and MVMEC unveiled a new look and logo. They are also designing a homepage (URL address to be announced).

Plans for year four include an expanded MVMEC Industrial Advisory Council to incorporate more manufacturers. Internally, the MVMEC staff continues expanding both in number and outreach. Now rural counties in the southeastern part of MVMEC's operational area will be assisted proactively by a full-time rural regional manager based in Ironton, Ohio.

MVMEC will distribute an Environmental Competitiveness Self-Assessment brochure to manufacturers interested in uncovering their own needs and taking preventative environmental actions. The brochure is a questionnaire and rating system with a reply card that allows companies the convenience of a quick self-assessment and response to MVMEC.

The QS9000NET course is underway for four client firms seeking timely QS 9000 certification. The course will guide them through the process of creating a quality management system that meets ISO 9000 or QS 9000 requirements. During the course participants will create their own plan and schedule for managing their quality program and learn the necessary skills for implementation.

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PENNSYLVANIA

North/East Pennsylvania Manufacturing Extension Partnership—The Northeastern Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center (NEPIRC), one of the partners in the North/East Pennsylvania Manufacturing Extension Partnership, implemented a customized three-to-five-day

Training Needs Assessment to help manufacturers identify and address employee development needs and activities. Through a company approved combination of group and individual interviews, focus groups, on-the job observations, written surveys, and review of production statistics, information is gathered for the assessment. The company receives overall findings in a final report which, most importantly, identifies training needs and makes priority recommendations. NEPIRC also discusses and identifies non-training issues with the company.

Companies benefit through reductions in unnecessary training costs, and they are able to plan and budget for yearly training. Additionally, they save time in data collection, since "an outside agency"—NEPIRC—provides the concentrated effort. "We provide a 'tool' that is developed and 'owned' by the company," says Kim Pappas, workforce development coordinator, "one that can be administered by the company in-house, as needed, into the future." For further information, contact NEPIRC at (717) 819-8966.

Contact: Pat Felise at (610) 758-6069

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership (SCMEP)—The development of a business plan and mission statement led to an impact of \$295,000 at East Coast SpecialTees, an embroidery and screen printer in South Carolina. SCMEP not only helped increase sales by 20%, but East Coast has also exceeded their 1996 revenue goal. The number of misprints dropped and employee morale improved.

In 1995, East Coast faced many problems including low-employee morale, and finding and maintaining skilled labor. These problems resulted in a decrease in sales and profits, and lower product quality.

A SCMEP manufacturing specialist visited the printing company in 1996 and performed a Competitiveness Review(c), an on-site assessment to review East Coast's overall business operations. As a result, an expert in developing strategic business plans from Trident Technical College in Charleston, S.C. was contracted to help develop a business plan.

A series of questions were asked, "what do you do? who are your customers? how do you compete? what are your strengths and weaknesses and what are your values?" After defining the basics, the information led to an improved workforce and a growing business.

"Before SCMEP, I was truly lost and frustrated, but they helped me establish a foothold with my labor force and my company," says Earle Huffman, owner of East Coast SpecialTees.

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VIRGINIA

A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Center—The A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Center is moving ahead with plans to make manufacturing extension services available throughout Virginia. Historically, the center has served a 23-county region in southern and central Virginia. The new offices will bring the number of Philpott Center locations to eight.

New field engineers Paul Zirkel and Frank Daly are already calling on Richmond-area manufacturers. They bring more than 50 years of combined experience to their jobs. Zirkel's background is in electronics and precision instruments. Daly was recently director of engineering for a manufacturer of eyeglass frames. Zirkel and Daly are working from temporary quarters until they open their new Richmond field office sometime in July.

A second new field office will open in mid-summer on the campus of James Madison University, in Harrisonburg, to serve Virginia's portion of the Shenandoah Valley. Veteran plant manager Gerald Burch is moving from Mississippi to take one field engineer slot. Recruiting continues for the second position.

Meanwhile, partnerships have been signed to provide manufacturing extension services to Virginia's coastal and mountain regions.

The Technology Applications Center of Old Dominion University, in Norfolk, is hosting field engineers Keith Parkinson and Kevin Lockerby. Like the Richmond team, they bring more than a half-century of combined experience to their jobs. Parkinson recently managed a joint venture that developed plastic food packaging. Trained as a chemical engineer, Lockerby is equally at home in the technical and marketing sides of product development.

A similar partnership was signed May 20 with the Manufacturing Technology Center, a consortium of five Southwest Virginia Community Colleges.

Finally, the Philpott Center is getting a name change to better reflect its statewide mission. At the start of the Virginia fiscal year on July 1, it will become Virginia's A.L. Philpott Manufacturing Extension Partnership (VPMEP). The new name was also picked to show Team Philpott's partnership with NIST MEP.

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